

Michael Johnson

Michael Johnson is one of the greatest sprinters of all time. During his successful athletics career in the 1990s, Johnson won four Olympic gold medals and eight World Championship gold medals.

Early Life

Born in 1967 in Dallas, Texas, Michael Johnson was the youngest of five children. His father, Paul, was a truck driver and his mother, Ruby, was a teacher. He began running at an early age, entering his first competition at the age of just ten. Soon, Johnson was setting school and college records – he broke the fastest 200m record for his university in his very first race! Although he showed promise as a sprinter, Johnson remained focused on his studies and had hopes of becoming an architect. After attending classes for gifted students at school, he graduated with a degree in Accounting and Marketing from Baylor University in 1990.

Athletics Career

After a stress fracture stopped him competing at the Seoul Olympics in 1988, Johnson made his Olympic debut

in Barcelona in 1992. Hopes were high. Unfortunately, after arriving in Spain to prepare for competition, he became ill with food poisoning and failed to qualify for the finals in either the 200m or the 400m sprints. Achieving a world record and gold medal in the 4 x 400m relay race was small consolation.

'The Man with the Golden Shoes'

Having won separate gold medals in the 200m in 1991 and 400m in 1993, in 1995, Johnson became the first man to win World Championship gold medals in both distances.

Just one year later, at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, he wore a pair of gold running shoes when he repeated this achievement. In the 400m sprint, Johnson set an Olympic record of 43.49 seconds and just three days later, he set a 200m world record of 19.32 seconds.



Did You Know...?

It is rumoured that Michael Johnson preferred individual running races as opposed to team sports, such as basketball or baseball, because he liked to depend only on himself.



Did You Know...?

Despite dominating his sport, Michael Johnson had a low profile in the USA, where athletics is not widely followed.

Despite injury problems, Johnson retained his 400m world championship title in 1997. In 1999, aged 33, he won his fourth title in the event in a world record time of 43.18 seconds – a record which would stand for 17 years!



Outside Athletics

Michael Johnson made a new name for himself as a television commentator after retiring. He covered the London Olympics in 2012 for the BBC and was again part of the commentary team for the Rio Olympics in 2016.

In 2004, Johnson was elected into the United States Track and Field Hall of Fame. In 2007, he founded Michael Johnson Performance, a training facility for young and professional athletes of all sports.



Did You Know...?

Johnson was commentating on TV when his 400m world record was broken by the South African sprinter, Wayde van Niekerk, in 2016.

Questions

1. How many World and Olympic gold medals did Michael Johnson win?

2. How many brothers and sisters did Michael Johnson have?

 3 4 5 6

3. What did he study at university?

4. Why did Michael Johnson fail to win an individual medal at the Barcelona Olympics?

 He had a stress fracture. He missed his flight. He had food poisoning. He made a false start.

5. What was he the first man to achieve in 1995?

 He won World Championship gold in both 200m and 400m. He won Olympic gold in both 200m and 400m. He set a world record in both 200m and 400m. He was disqualified from both 200m and 400m Olympic finals.

6. What was his 400m world record time set in 1999?

- 43.49 seconds
- 19.32 seconds
- 24.20 seconds
- 43.18 seconds

7. What has Michael Johnson done twice for the BBC?

8. How did he find out his 400m world record had been broken in 2016?

Answers

1. How many World and Olympic gold medals did Michael Johnson win?
Michael Johnson won a total of 12 World and Olympic gold medals: 8 at the World Championships and 4 Olympic golds.
2. How many brothers and sisters did Michael Johnson have?
4
3. What did he study at university?
He studied Accounting and Marketing at university.
4. Why did Michael Johnson fail to win an individual medal at the Barcelona Olympics?
He had food poisoning.
5. What was he the first man to achieve in 1995?
He won World Championship gold in both 200m and 400m.
6. What was his long-standing 400m world record time set in 1999?
43.18 seconds
7. What has Michael Johnson done twice for the BBC?
He has worked on the commentary team for the Olympic Games twice.
8. How did he find out his 400m world record had been broken in 2016?
He was in the commentary booth, watching it.

Michael Johnson

Winner of four Olympic gold medals and eight World Championship gold medals during a career spanning over 20 years, American sprinter Michael Johnson is widely considered one of the greatest track and field athletes of all time.

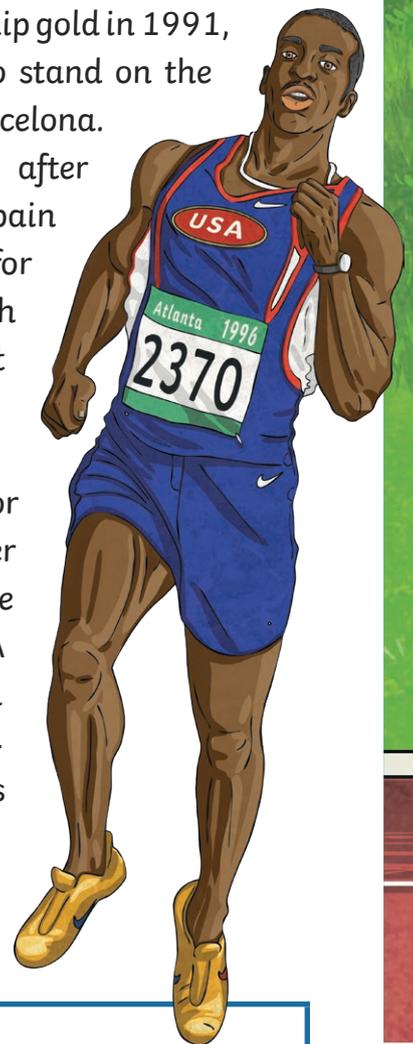
His Early Life

Born in 1967 in Dallas, Texas, Michael Johnson was the youngest of five children, all of whom showed an interest in sport. His father, Paul, was a truck driver and his mother, Ruby, a teacher. He began running at an early age, entering his first competition at the age of just ten. Soon, Johnson was setting school and college records – he broke the fastest 200m record for his university in his very first race! Although he showed promise as a sprinter, Johnson remained focused on his studies and his childhood dream of becoming an architect. After attending classes for gifted students at school, he studied Accounting and Marketing at Baylor University. His coach, Clyde Hart, felt that Johnson's good grades and maturity would help him to become a successful athlete. Graduating in 1990, he gained not

only a Bachelor's degree but also the world number one ranking in both the 200m and 400m sprints.

A Promising Start

After a stress fracture in his left leg prevented him from competing in the US trials for the Seoul Olympics in 1988, Johnson made his Olympic debut in 1992. Ranked number one in the world in 1990 and having won the 200m World Championship gold in 1991, he was expected to stand on the podium in Barcelona. Unfortunately, after arriving in Spain to prepare for competition, both he and his agent became ill. As a result, Johnson failed to qualify for the finals in either the 200m or the 400m sprints. A world record and gold medal in the 4 x 400m relay was small consolation.



Did You Know...?

Michael Johnson developed an unconventional but effective upright running style, taking shorter steps than most other athletes.



Did You Know...?

Despite dominating his sport, Michael Johnson had a low profile in the USA where athletics is not widely followed. He was, however, a household name in Europe and Asia!

'The Man with the Golden Shoes'

At the next Summer Olympics, in Atlanta, USA, in 1996, Johnson wore a pair of specially designed gold running shoes. The shoes earned him the nickname, 'The Man with the Golden Shoes'.

First, in the 400m, he set an Olympic record of 43.49 seconds (almost a whole second faster than silver medallist, Roger Black). Just three days later, he set a 200m world record of 19.32 seconds. He had become the first male athlete in history to win both events at the same Olympics.

Despite once again struggling with injury problems, Johnson retained his 400m world championship title in 1997. In 1999, at the relatively advanced age of 33, he won his fourth title in the event in a world record time

of 43.18 seconds – a record which would stand for 17 years!

Outside Athletics

Following retirement from athletics in 2001, Michael Johnson made a new name for himself as a television commentator. He covered the London Olympics in 2012 for the BBC and was again part of the commentary team for the Rio Olympics in 2016. Johnson has also written for The Times and The Telegraph in the UK. In 2007, he founded Michael Johnson Performance, a training facility for young and professional athletes of all sports.

In 2004, he was elected into the United States Track and Field Hall of Fame.



Did You Know...?

Johnson was commentating live on TV when his 400m world record was broken by South African sprinter, Wayde van Niekerk, after 17 years. He remarked to the audience, "He just put those guys away!"

Questions

1. For how long did Michael Johnson run competitively?

2. How many brothers and sisters did Michael Johnson have?

 3 4 5 6

3. Which two qualities were believed to help him to become a successful athlete?

4. Describe how Michael Johnson's running style was unusual.

5. Why did Michael Johnson fail to win an individual medal at the Barcelona Olympics?

 He had a stress fracture. He missed his flight. He had food poisoning. He made a false start.

6. What does this sentence tell us about how Michael Johnson felt about his performance at the Barcelona Olympics?

A world record and gold medal in the 4 x 400m relay was small consolation.

7. What was his 1999 400m world record time and for how long did it stand?

8. Name two things he has done since retiring from competitive sprinting.

9. How did he find out his 400m world record had been broken in 2016?

10. Tick the correct box related to each statement in the table:

	True	False
Michael Johnson was the first man to win Olympic gold in 200m and 400m at the same Olympics.		
A stress fracture in his right leg prevented him from competing in the 1988 Seoul Olympics.		
Michael Johnson wore gold running shorts at the Atlanta Olympics.		
During his career, Michael Johnson was most famous in Europe and Asia.		
Michael Johnson had very few injuries during his career.		

Answers

- For how long did Michael Johnson run competitively?
He ran competitively for over 20 years.
- How many brothers and sisters did Michael Johnson have?
4
- Which two qualities were believed to help him to become a successful athlete?
His good grades and maturity were believed to help him to become a successful athlete.
- Describe how Michael Johnson's running style was unusual.
Michael Johnson's running style was upright and with shorter steps, which was different when compared to other athletes.
- Why did Michael Johnson fail to win an individual medal at the Barcelona Olympics?
He had food poisoning.
- What does this sentence tell us about how Michael Johnson felt about his performance at the Barcelona Olympics?
A world record and gold medal in the 4 x 400m relay was small consolation.
It tells us that although he recovered enough from his food poisoning to win a team medal, he was still disappointed by his individual performance.
- What was his 1999 400m world record time and for how long did it stand?
His 400m world record time in 1999 was 43.18 seconds and it stood for 17 years.
- Name two things he has done since retiring from competitive sprinting.
Accept any two examples from the following: commentating, writing for newspapers, setting up a training facility for professional athletes and being elected to the US Track and Field Hall of Fame.
- How did he find out his 400m world record had been broken in 2016?
He was in the commentary booth, watching it.
- Link the statements to 'true' or 'false'.

	True	False
Michael Johnson was the first man to win Olympic gold in 200m and 400m at the same Olympics.	✓	
A stress fracture in his right leg prevented him from competing in the 1988 Seoul Olympics.	✓	
Michael Johnson wore gold running shorts at the Atlanta Olympics.	✓	
During his career, Michael Johnson was most famous in Europe and Asia.		✓
Michael Johnson had very few injuries during his career.		✓

Michael Johnson

Winner of four Olympic gold medals and eight World Championship gold medals during a career spanning over 20 years, American sprinter Michael Johnson is widely considered one of the greatest track and field athletes of all time. He dominated his two preferred events (200m and 400m) throughout the 1990s before retiring from competition in 2001.

His Early Life

Born in 1967 in Dallas, Texas, Michael Johnson was the youngest of five children, all of whom showed an interest in sport. His father, Paul, was a truck driver and his mother, Ruby, a teacher.

Johnson began running at an early age, entering his first competition at the age of just ten, encouraged by his supportive family. He soon began to win races and even set school and

Did You Know...?

- It is rumoured that Michael Johnson preferred running as opposed to team sports, such as basketball or baseball, because he didn't like to depend on other people.
- His unconventional but effective upright running style contradicted the commonly-held view that for maximum speed, sprinters should have a high knee lift.

college records, including the 200m record for his university in his very first race. As well as showing talent on the field, he was also a focused academic who dedicated much of his time to his studies. After attending classes for gifted students at school, Johnson studied Accounting and Marketing at Baylor University. It was here that, Clyde Hart, the athletics coach, noticed Johnson's good grades and maturity. He believed these qualities would stand him in good stead to become a successful athlete.

Graduating in 1990, Johnson gained not only a Bachelor's degree, but also the world number one ranking in both 200m and 400m track events.

A Promising Start

After a stress fracture in his left fibula prevented him from competing in the US trials for the Seoul Olympics in 1988, Johnson made his Olympic debut in 1992 in Spain. Ranked number one in the world in 1990 and having won the 200m World Championship gold in 1991, he was the favourite to win both his events in Barcelona.



Unfortunately, after arriving in Spain early to prepare for competition, both he and his agent contracted food poisoning. As a result, Johnson lost weight and strength and so failed to qualify for the finals in either the 200m or the 400m events. A world record and gold medal in the 4 x 400m relay was small consolation for a man at the height of his fitness.

Preparing for the upcoming Atlanta Olympics in 1996, Johnson won medals in both of his preferred distances at major competitions over the next four years, including the U.S. National Championships in 1995. He became the first man to win World Championship gold medals in both distances.

'The Man with the Golden Shoes'

Just one year later, in 1996, Johnson wore a pair of specially designed gold running shoes (the left shoe a half size smaller than the right) when he repeated the double achievement at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta. These shoes earned him the

nickname, 'The Man with the Golden Shoes'.

As before, Johnson ran in both the 200m and the 400m sprints. In the 400m sprint, he won gold and set an Olympic record of 43.49 seconds, which was almost a whole second faster than the silver medallist, Roger Black. Just three days later, Johnson then set a world record of 19.32 seconds in the 200m. He had become the first male athlete in history to win both events at the same Olympics.

In 1999, at the mature age of 33, Johnson set a world record for the 400m; he completed the race in 43.18 seconds – a record which would stand for 17 years. He also became the oldest man in Olympic history to win an event shorter than 5,000m.

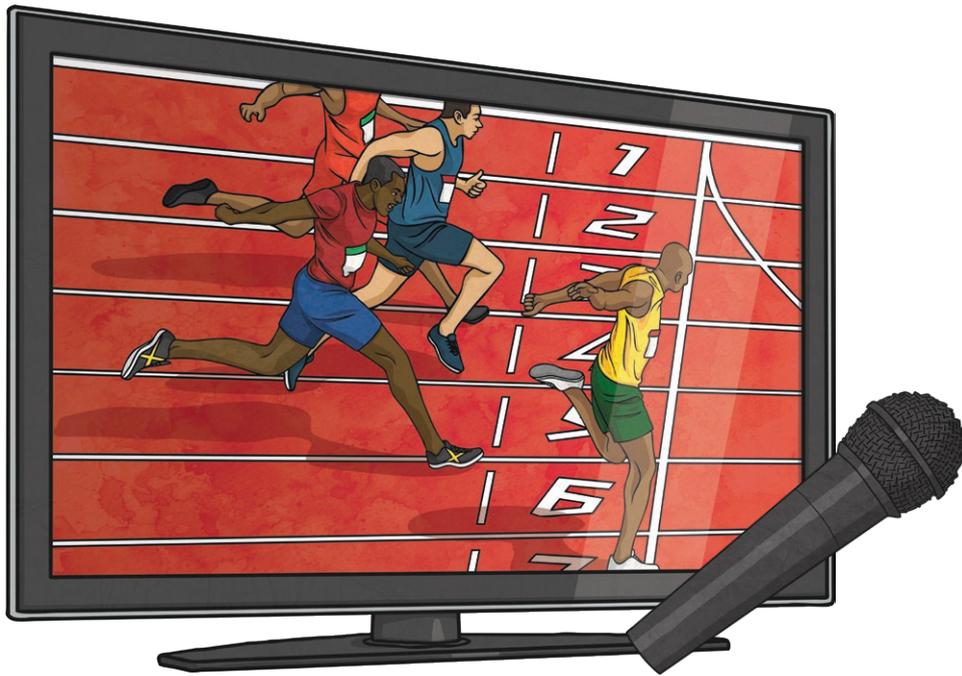
Outside Athletics

Since retiring from competitive sprinting in 2001, Michael Johnson has made a new name for himself as a television commentator. He has worked for the BBC covering the London Olympics in 2012 and as



Did You Know...?

Michael Johnson had a low profile in the USA for much of his career in spite of his dominance in his field.



part of the commentary team for the Rio Olympics in 2016. Johnson has also written for The Times and The Telegraph in the UK and has starred in reality TV show, *Celebrity Apprentice*, in the USA.

In 2007, he founded Michael Johnson Performance, a training facility for young and professional athletes of all sports.

In 2004, he was elected into the United States Track and Field Hall of Fame, and his 200m race at the 1996 Summer Olympics was named, 'the greatest track and field moment of the last 25 years'.



Did You Know...?

Johnson was in the commentary booth in Rio in 2016 when his long-standing 400m world record time – unbroken for 17 years – was beaten by 24-year-old South African sprinter, Wayde van Niekerk. Johnson exclaimed to the audience, "Oh my God! From lane eight, a world record! He just put those guys away!"

Questions

1. How many World and Olympic gold medals did Johnson win?

2. **Find** and **copy** one word which tells us that his family encouraged him during his early childhood?

3. What did Johnson's athletics coach notice?

4. What three things did Michael Johnson hold when he graduated in 1990?

5. What does the word 'unconventional' mean?

6. Tick the correct box related to each statement in the table:

	True	False
Michael Johnson couldn't compete in the 1988 Seoul Olympics because of food poisoning.		
He preferred football to running because he liked team sports.		
He was the first man to win Olympic gold medals in 200m and 400m.		
He had a close finish with Roger Black in the 400m race in Barcelona.		
He had a low profile in the USA for much of his career.		

7. Name three facts about his 400m world record set in 1999.

8. What does the phrase 'dominance in his field' tell you about his competitive career?

9. Name two things he has done since retiring from competitive sprinting.

10. How did he find out his 400m world record had been broken in 2016 and how did he react?

Answers

- How many World and Olympic gold medals did Johnson win?
He ran for over 20 years and achieved 8 World Championship and 4 Olympic gold medals.
- Find** and **copy** one word which tells us that his family encouraged him during his early childhood.
supportive
- What did Johnson's athletics coach notice?
He noticed his 'good grades and maturity'.
- What three things did Michael Johnson hold when he graduated in 1990?
He held a degree in Accounting and Marketing and world number 1 status in both the 200m and the 400m events.
- What does the word 'unconventional' mean?
It means that his running style was unusual and different from other sprinters'.
- Tick the correct box related to each statement in the table:

	True	False
Michael Johnson couldn't compete in the 1988 Seoul Olympics because of food poisoning.		✓
He preferred football to running because he liked team sports.		✓
He was the first man to win Olympic gold medals in 200m and 400m.	✓	
He had a close finish with Roger Black in the 400m race in Barcelona.		✓
He had a low profile in the USA for much of his career.	✓	

- Name three facts about his 400m world record set in 1999.
The time was 43.18 seconds, it stood for 17 years and he was 33 years old when he set it.
- What does the phrase 'dominance in his field' tell you about his competitive career?
It tells us that he was the favourite to win in any race he entered and that his competitors struggled to reach his standard.
- Name two things he has done since retiring from competitive sprinting.
Accept any two answers from: commentating, writing for newspapers, starred in US Celebrity Apprentice, setting up a training facility for professional athletes and being elected to the US Track and Field Hall of Fame.
- How did he find out his 400m world record had been broken in 2016 and how did he react?
He was in the commentary booth, watching it.